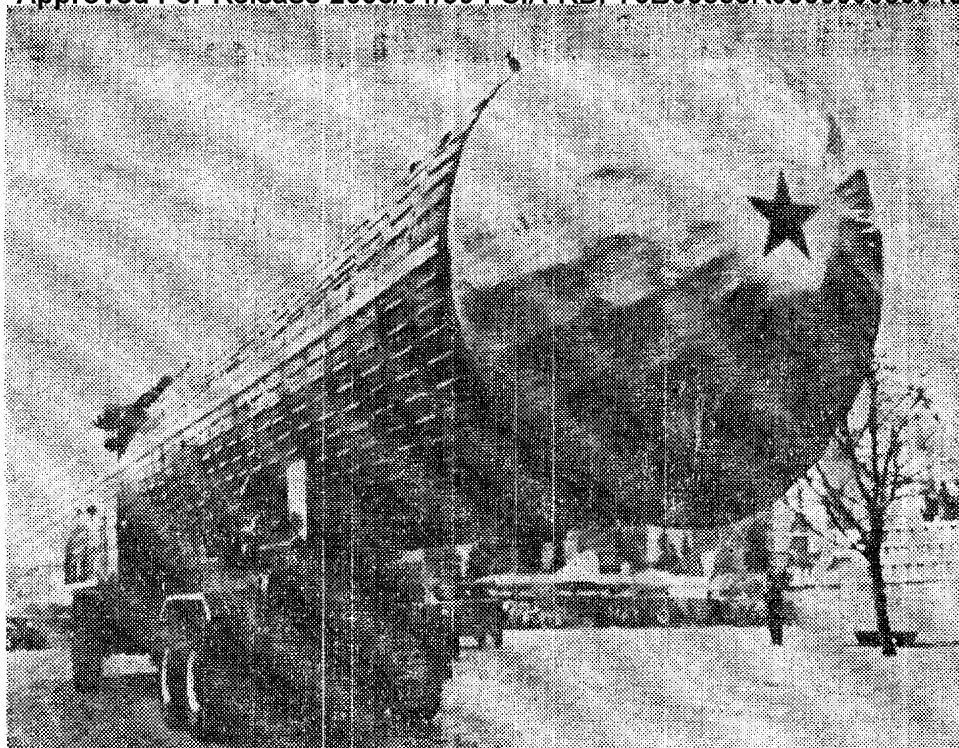


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United Press International

A rocket in Moscow's Red Square: the Soviet nuclear arms race proceeds.

Russia Raises Ante in Missile Game

By Chalmers M. Roberts
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A four-year relative standstill in the Soviet-American balance of terror is coming to an end and a new round in the nuclear arms race is now getting under way.

Once again the Soviet Union is raising the ante and the United States is moving to match it.

When Nikita Khrushchev backed away from the brink in the Cuba missile crisis, the Kremlin appeared to accept a three- or four-to-one disparity in missiles. Moscow seemed willing to live with this missile gap since its own smaller force was sufficient to deter any first

strike by the United States that the Soviet leaders may have thought their American counterparts might have in mind.

NOW DEFENSE Secretary Robert S. McNamara has released enough information to show that that period, if it ever really existed, is over. The Soviet Union is moving to improve its nuclear posture vis-a-vis the United States.

McNamara first said the Soviets are deploying an anti-ballistic missile system around their cities. He later reported that Soviet intercontinental ballistic missile production apparently is being increased.

Furthermore, the Soviets are improving protection for their ICBMs by hardening the sites from which they can be fired and by introducing mobile missiles

which makes their location harder to detect.

The American response includes a go-ahead on the submarine-based Poseidon missile but so far McNamara has resisted increasing the number of American ICBMs or putting an anti-ballistic missile system into production.

THE UNHAPPY fact is that McNamara and the Johnson Administration are now likely to be charged with an "anti-missile gap" much as the Eisenhower Administration was charged with a missile gap. That latter one turned out to be phony but not before the Democrats had used it with effect in the 1960 Presidential campaign.

That the "anti-missile gap" is likely to be used now by Republicans with



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1968 in mind is evident from the fact that Gov. George Romney seized on the idea in his first TV interview after the November election.

Administration officials freely acknowledge that the political pressures in the new Congress probably will be immense on this issue. But they haven't figured out what to do about it.

American and Soviet scientists in unofficial levels have talked about the anti-ballistic missile and how it would bring a new round in the arms race. But the subject seems to have been taboo at the political level, officials indicate. There have been some reports of conversations on this topic but if they have taken place the result appears to have been nil.

Officials here believe the

Soviet moves have been taken strictly as military action to improve defense capabilities. Washington tends to look upon the current Kremlin leadership as internally weak and thus susceptible to military pressure on defense issues.

WHETHER THE Kremlin leaders, in deciding to raise the nuclear ante, considered the inevitable Washington reaction is simply unknown here. The rule which seems to have applied, as it has in the past, is that any weapon that is developed is built.

Vannevar Bush long ago described the two nuclear superpowers as "two scorpions in a bottle" able to sting each other to death but unable to escape the bottle. They are still there and about to add some new stingers.